



quarterly news

The following publications are available upon request:

- Patterns of Global Terrorism
- Supporting Human Rights and Democracy
- Trafficking in Persons Report
- Consular Notification and Access
- IGA: Working with State and Local Governments
- Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts
- U.S. Department of State: A Guide to Doing Business
- Country Background Notes
- Travel Tips for Students
- Travel Warnings



Early Spring 2007

Message from the Director**Congratulations 2007 State & Local Officials – My Office Is Here to Help You**

Another election has come and gone, and we congratulate all newly elected and re-elected officials throughout the United States. If this is your first time serving in public office, we hope you are enjoying the exciting new opportunity to craft policies designed to improve the quality of life in your states and communities.

I hope you are also discovering the vast range of resources the government makes available to you. For example, each Federal department maintains an Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, which exists to respond to your questions or concerns about Federal policy. These offices are also readily available to assist you on any legislative measure you are considering that may relate to Federal law.

Here in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, we are available to provide answers to your pressing questions on foreign policy.

For example, are you considering an international trade mission to promote the competitive business climate in your state or city? My office has ample statistics and data available that will certainly help you reach your goals. We can also arrange briefings and provide you with crucial background information on any country in the world – on almost any international topic. Many state and local officials have said these background briefings are also useful when making preparations to welcome foreign delegations.

This, of course, is only a small sampling of the services we can offer you. For more information and updates, please visit us on the web: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/iga/>

Thank you for serving, and good luck in 2007!

Anthony Welcher, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

The Arab-American Leadership Forum: A Vital Dialogue
State Department Event Stresses Importance of ‘Sharing’

Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels addresses delegates at the Arab-American Leadership Forum November 15, 2006.

Just days after last November's elections, more than 100 Arab-American political and community leaders from across the country gathered at State Department headquarters in Washington to take part in the Arab-American Leadership Forum.

Participants engaged officials from the Department of State and the White House on a wide range of topics, including Iraq, Lebanon, democratic reform, and the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East.

What is the Arab-American Leadership Forum?

The Forum was an innovative series of briefings and discussions designed to directly link the Arab-American political community with the nation's top foreign policy officials. It was held November 14-15, 2006.

Continued on next page.

The Arab-American Leadership Forum (cont.)

Who were the presenters?

The event attracted high-profile speakers and government experts, including Ambassador David Satterfield, Iraq Coordinator, and Dr. James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute. Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels opened the second day of the Forum with anecdotes and memories of growing up in a Syrian-American community.

Were the delegates able to offer suggestions?

The event's attendees presented the Forum's speakers with pressing questions and diverse ideas on how the U.S. can effectively

manage ongoing Middle East issues.

"The Forum is a venue for both sharing and for learning," event creator Nicole Thompson said. "Each community in our country has a voice. It's critically important that we hear them. It's also very important that they hear and understand the U.S. Government's perspective as well."

Is this the first program of its kind?

The Forum marked the second time in 2006 that the Department of State spearheaded a program designed specifically for Arab-American political leaders. The Department held the Middle Eastern-American Leadership Assembly in April. ■



Norwood, Massachusetts Selectman Helen Abdallah Donohue speaks about the Arab-American Leadership Forum during town meetings and other gatherings.

ON THE AIR: Syrian-American Official Applauds U.S. Outreach Efforts on TV

Cable TV viewers in Norwood, Massachusetts have been given a unique look at the Arab-American Leadership Forum. Thanks to town official Helen Abdallah Donohue, who attended the Forum, viewers have been given a play-by-play recap of the conference on America's Middle East policy.

"I've been telling people about the goal of the Forum," said Abdallah Donohue, who has been a member of Norwood's Board of Selectmen for 6 years. "It's been a good way to get word out that America is trying to improve relations with the Middle East."

Abdallah Donohue discusses the forum on Norwood Public Access Television's weekly talk show, at town council meetings and other community gatherings. She says her constituents have been "exceptionally impressed" by U.S. outreach efforts.

Abdallah Donohue's comments carry a great deal of weight in the Arab-American community, where many members have expressed concerns about U.S. policy in the Middle East. Abdallah Donohue says it is clear the United States is deeply committed to improving relations in the region.

"I tell them the Federal government is doing the best they can," she said. "They are trying wholeheartedly."

Abdallah Donohue grew up in Norwood, about 15 miles southwest of Boston, on land her family has owned for more than a century. Her great-grandfather, John Abdallah, a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church, immigrated in 1890, fleeing religious discrimination in his native Syria. Mr. Abdallah became a U.S. citizen one year later.

Politics run deep in the Abdallah family. Abdallah Donohue's father and sister both served as Norwood Selectmen. And Abdallah Donohue said attending the Forum helped her greatly as an elected leader.

"One of the biggest honors in my life was to participate in the Arab-American Leadership Forum," Abdallah Donohue said. "It was exceptionally informative and interesting. My knowledge grew that day-and-a-half in Washington." ■



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Iraq's Small Business Lifeline

U.S. Microfinance Loans Energize Iraqi Entrepreneurs

On the streets of Baghdad, Mosul and Karbala, hundreds of small, "mom-and-pop" businesses are flourishing, despite Iraq's immense challenges. Their source of hope has been microfinance – a flurry of small loans backed by the U.S. Government, which have turned unemployed Iraqi women and men into successful entrepreneurs.

Microfinance loans are short-term, usually less than 1 year, and typically extend to the "informal economy" of a country, whose members, due to personal or financial circumstances, cannot get loans from regular banks. The majority of microfinance borrowers

Microfinance in Iraq – Numbers Tell the Story

- \$18,000,000: Amount Iraqi business owners borrowed from USAID between January 2003 and January 2007.
- 16,455: Number of Iraqi borrowers between January 2003 and January 2007.
- \$1,140: Amount of the average small business loan.
- 98: Percentage of Iraqi small business loans repaid in full to the US Government.

are small businesses owners, many of whom are women.

As of January 2007, 98% of Iraqi borrowers had paid their loans back.

President Bush reiterated his strong commitment to these successful efforts during his 2007 State of the Union Address, when he announced his plan to significantly increase funds for microfinance activities in Iraq.

The United States Government also currently supports microfinance programs in Afghanistan, Sudan, and more than 60 other countries. These programs are the engine of economic growth in many developing nations.

Governors Surprise U.S. Troops in Middle East

Four sitting governors quietly swooped into Baghdad, Kabul and Kuwait City last November – the latest in a series of excursions sponsored by the State Department and Pentagon.

Governors Jon Corzine of New Jersey, Jon Huntsman of Utah, Ted Kulongoski of Oregon, and George Pataki, then governor of New York, made the surprise visit to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait to visit troops from their home states serving in the war on terror.

"I am so proud of the men and women of our Armed Forces who are doing a tremendous job in extraordinarily difficult circumstances," Governor Corzine said. "They are putting their lives on the line every day to serve our country and help the Iraqis build their future."

In Baghdad, the governors were briefed by the U.S. Army Central Command, and met with General George Casey, then



General Casey welcomes Gov. Corzine to Baghdad.

the top U.S. commander in Iraq. They also met with Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Iraq's U.S. Ambassador.

The delegation then toured Tikrit, Iraq, where they discussed the reconstruction process with Iraqi officials who are part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team. Members of these teams are front-line operatives in the campaign to stabilize Iraq. In his State of the Union Address in January, President Bush announced that the

United States will expand its Provincial Reconstruction Team program to support U.S. strategic priorities in Iraq and help accelerate the transition to Iraqi self-reliance.

Since February 2004, the State Department Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Pentagon have arranged for 34 governors to visit troops from their home states serving in the Middle East. ■



General Casey speaks with Governors Kulongoski, Pataki, Huntsman and Corzine shortly after their arrival in Baghdad.



Governor Kulongoski happily accepts a gift from Oregonians serving at Camp Phoenix near Kabul, Afghanistan.



Governor Pataki meets troops serving at Bagram Air Force Base, near Kabul, Afghanistan.

U.S. Elected Officials Abroad

California and Mexico Strengthen Ties

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger pushed economic growth and tourism—and even talked Spinach—with Mexican President Felipe Calderón during a late fall trip to Mexico.

In a meeting with the Mexican President, Governor Schwarzenegger discussed lifting the ban on importation of California-grown spinach. It fulfilled a promise Gov. Schwarzenegger made to California farmers following the E-coli outbreak in September.



Governor Schwarzenegger, First Ladies Margarita Zavala and Maria Shriver and President Calderón in Mexico City, November 10, 2006.

“When I became Governor 3 years ago, I promised to be California’s number one salesman. I said I would go anywhere in the world to sell California products, promote tourism and pump up our state’s economy,” Gov. Schwarzenegger said. “California-grown spinach is delicious and nutritious for everyone to enjoy as part of a healthy diet.”

The Governor took his rally for California spinach one step further when he and famous Mexican television chef Lulu Pedraza whipped up a meal using spinach and other California-grown products.

Schwarzenegger also announced that Mexico City would be the future home of a new California tourism office. Mexico is the leading source of international tourists to California and the Governor hopes the new tourism office will increase the visibility of California as an international travel destination.

In a move toward better governing and quality of life for thousands of California and Mexico’s citizens, Governor Schwarzenegger signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mexican State of Nuevo Leon. The agreement seeks to increase academic cooperation, foster economic relationships and expand intergovernmental communication between the two states. ■

What IGA Can Do For YOU...

We help you reach U.S. foreign policy experts:

- Coordinate meetings with State Department experts in Washington or your community;
- Arrange special-issue briefings; and
- Create a forum in which your foreign policy views can be heard by senior State Department officials.

We are your One-Stop Service Center:

- Provide information on foreign policy, international trade, exchanges, and protocol issues;
- Engage the support of U.S. Embassies or Missions for official delegations’ travel abroad; and
- Direct state and local officials to the appropriate State Department office for international travel or foreign policy concerns.

Information Requests

Contact us by phone,
e-mail or mail at:

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Bureau of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW, Room 2206
Washington, DC 20520-2204

PHONE:

(202) 647-5358

FAX:

(202) 647-1579

E-MAIL:

paiga@state.gov

Your IGA Contacts

Anthony Welcher
Director
welcherAB@state.gov

Linda Green
Western Region
greenLK@state.gov

Bettye Mayes
Midwestern Region
mayesBC@state.gov

Nicole Thompson
Northeastern Region
thompsonNA@state.gov

Drew Bailey
Southern Region
baileyAC@state.gov

On the Horizon Spring 2007

MARCH 2007

- 3 – 7 National Association of Counties, Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
- 10 – 14 National League of Cities, Congressional City Conference, Washington, DC
- 14 – 17 National Lieutenant Governors Association, Winter Meeting, Washington, DC

APRIL 2007

- 19 – 21 National Conference of State Legislatures, Spring Forum, Washington, DC
- 26 – 29 American Legislative Exchange Council, 2007 Spring Task Force Summit, Hilton Head, South Carolina

MAY 2007

- 9 – 11 National Association of Counties, Western Interstate Region Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska